

Collect!

Knowing how to use Google™ or any other Internet search engine to find appropriate information online is a key skill that all teachers and students must learn as part of learning online. Just because someone can “google” doesn’t mean they know how to conduct research online. We’ll show you some basic search strategies that will allow you to get the most out of your Internet searches, tell you how to save your search results and then show you how to apply this to a CareerForward™ activity.

Finding the Right Words

The first thing to do, even before getting close to that search engine, is to sit for a moment and think about what it is that you’re searching for. Take a look at the activity below from Module 1:

“Search the Internet for websites that have information about how to find a job or how to pick a job that is a good fit for you. Make a list of these sites, and describe each one and why you found it helpful. Make the list available to other students taking this course.”

What words, phrases or activities come to mind after reading this? Certainly words and phrases like “job,” “employment” and “finding a job” immediately pop into your head. But if you’re a casual googler, you know that typing these words into the search text box will yield hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of hits. Try this out for yourself and see! And who knows how many of these websites have anything to do with what you’re looking for? We have one objective when searching online:

- Come up with the most appropriate list of hits possible

To meet this objective, the first thing to do is to come up with a list of search terms that you think best represents the kind of information or site you’re looking for. You have to ask yourself all kinds of questions about the nature of your search, such as:

- Am I really sure about what I’m looking for or am I looking for more than one thing?
- How many ways can I describe what I’m looking for?
- Are there common phrases that people use to describe what I’m looking for?
- Are there names of people, places or services that are related to what I’m searching for?

Collect! aligns with the following Michigan Merit Curriculum Guidelines for an Online Learning Experience:

- Develop Life-long Learning Skills
- Use of Technology Tools

Divide and Conquer

So in our example, we're supposed to look for "sites that have information about how to find a job or how to pick a job that is a good fit for you." Are we looking for one kind of site or two different sites? It looks like these could be two different searches, so let's go ahead and tackle one of them for now: how to pick a job that is a good fit for you.

Just to see what happens, we could simply type in this entire phrase into the search engine to see what comes up. Now depending on which search engine you use, you could come up with around one million hits or 15 million hits. However, the nice thing about search engines is that they will list sites more closely related to your search term toward the beginning of your list, and most often within the first two pages. You'll want to read the excerpts provided for each hit returned as they will not only tell you whether the site is relevant to your search needs, but they can also give you more clues on what other search terms you might use to get more appropriate hits.

Gather Ye Results

If you do find a few good hits, be sure to either bookmark the pages or make a copy of the link and paste it to a word processing document. An easy way to copy a link from your search results is to right-click on the link (Mac users will hold down the Ctrl key and click), select "copy link location" or "copy shortcut" and then paste into your document.

“COOLICIOUS! If you or your students are using an online bookmark site, like de.li.cio.us or Yahoo!™ bookmarks, why not try saving your search results to these sites so that they're accessible from any computer? **GIVE IT A TRY!**”

Quotable Quotes

So let's say you collected five or six appropriate links, but you know there are probably more out there. The next thing to do is to think about smaller phrases or groups of words that relate to your search term, like "pick a job." Using shorter and more specific search terms will often yield more specific results. Makes sense, eh? However, the key to using shorter search terms lies in the use of quotation marks. If you were to type in "pick a job" without the quotation marks, you would end up with a lot of pages that contain "pick" and "job" ("a" would be ignored), as well as "pick a job." But if you use quotation marks to indicate that this whole phrase should be searched for, you should get more appropriate results.

Less Is More

As you peruse the excerpts of your hits, you may notice a number of hits that consistently contain words or references that you don't want included in your search results. For example, I may notice that a number of my hits contain the word "volunteer" but I'm only interested in jobs that pay. To exclude any references to the word "volunteer" from your search results, place a minus sign in front of the term you want to exclude, for example "-volunteer" (without the quotes).

Sample Collect! Activity in CareerForward

Module 1 — Additional Activities — Activity 4

Search the Internet for websites that have information about how to find a job or how to pick a job that is a good fit for you. Make a list of these sites, and describe each one and why you found it helpful. Make the list available to other students taking this course.

Lesson Preparation

The first thing to understand about this activity is that it is not about finding and using a job search site. The purpose is for students to:

1. Get information about how to find a job or how to pick a job, rather than finding or picking a job; basically finding sound advice.
2. Determine the quality of the advice by finding consistent advice across a number of sources.

It's important to familiarize yourself with useful and useless sites that your students might encounter during their Internet search. To do this, come up with a list of search terms and try searching against them to see the kinds of websites and information that come up. Then try applying some of the search strategies mentioned earlier to see how your results change. Once you're comfortable with what is available, as well as how to modify your searches, you are ready to guide your students through this activity.

In addition to a web browser, your students will also need access to word processing software.

Teaching the Lesson

1. After describing the activity to your students, have them come up with lists of potential search terms they could use for this activity.
2. Without any further instruction, have them use their search terms using either Google or Yahoo! search engines.
3. Ask them to select what they think are the most relevant hits from the first two pages of results and copy/paste the links to a word processing document. Also ask them to note the number of total hits returned.
4. Ask a few students to share the search terms they used, a few of the sites they came up with and the total number of hits returned with their search.
5. Next, introduce one or two search strategies that would help students come up with more appropriate or narrower results, such as using different search terms, using the excerpts to come up with different search terms, using quotation marks and excluding search terms.
6. Have your students repeat step 3.
7. Have your student go through steps 5 and 6 again or until they have at least 10 sites on their list. Point out to your students the kind of focused results they should be working toward.
8. The final step in this activity is for your student to determine which advice is probably the most sound advice. They should base their decision on having read similar advice across different sources of information.

Activities in CareerForward

Model — Resources

- “How do you make money in the digital world?”
- “A typical workday.”

Model 2—Activities

- Activities 1

Model 3 — Resources

- “Opportunity Search”

Notes

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